

COMMITTEE ON CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT  
MINUTES  
August 1, 2017

After determining that a quorum was present, the Committee on Citizen Engagement convened in a meeting on August 1, 2017 at 11:35 a.m. in the City Hall Conference Room at City Hall, 215 E. McKinney Street, Denton, Texas.

PRESENT: Council Member Dalton Gregory and Council Member Gerard Hudspeth.

STAFF PRESENT: Bryan Langley, Sarah Kuechler, Sarah Lollar, Robby Stengel, Justin Harmon.

OTHERS PRESENT: Andrea Thomas with National Service Research

**A. Elect the Chair of the Committee on Citizen Engagement.**

Council Member Gregory nominated Council Member Hudspeth as Chair and Council Member Briggs as Vice Chair. The motion carried unanimously.

**B. Consider approval of the minutes from March 28, 2017.**

Council Member Gregory motioned, Council Member Hudspeth seconded to approve the minutes. The minutes were approved.

**C. Receive a report, hold a discussion, and give staff direction regarding the Citizen Survey Results.**

Sarah Kuechler introduced Andrea Thomas with National Service Research (NSR). Kuechler mentioned that NSR was selected to help with the 2017 Citizen Survey.

Kuechler stated that today's presentation will cover the major themes and results that were received; however, the full report is included in the meeting's backup and available for discussion or any questions the committee may have.

Kuechler presented that the survey was mailed to 7,000 randomly selected households on May 16, 2017. Over 1,300 responses were received which is a significant increase from the survey completed in 2015. Of those responses, 1,000 were online.

Gregory asked if the reason for the increased response was known.

Kuechler responded that the reason is because a different approach was taken with the last survey and this survey was completed with a different vendor. Also, the 2015 survey was mailed to only 1,400 households in order to control the responding population and wasn't widely marketed for the public to take the survey online. The current results are statistically significant; however, it is hard to compare with the 2015 results due to a larger margin of error in 2015 due to a smaller sample size.

Thomas explained that the NSR's margin of error for the 2017 survey is plus or minus 2.8% because the sample is much larger. The previous vendor's margin of error in 2015 is plus or minus 6.2%. Adding those numbers together makes a 9% plus or minus margin of error in order to become statistically significant.

Gregory mentioned a component that was in the 2015 survey for the business and development community and inquired if that was included in this year's survey. He also asked if we were able to get information on peer cities.

Kuechler responded that the business survey will be sent in April 2018.

Thomas responded that she used the benchmark cities that were provided to her and cities that had recently completed similar citizen surveys. She used College Station, Bryan, Austin, Plano, and Garland.

Kuechler believes that survey respondents may be the more engaged population of the citizenry because 74% voted in the last municipal election. Discussing "Quality of Life" characteristics, the results show 86% rated Denton as an excellent place to live. These results were very similar to the 2015 survey results.

Thomas mentioned that the "Value of services for taxes paid" is always the lowest rating in every City. She explained that this question is answered based off of the citizen's perception.

Kuechler explained that staff will use the information from this survey to focus time, resources, and communication efforts. She asked the committee if they had any questions.

Thomas commented that she was very pleased with the results regarding overall safety and that based off feedback, Denton has an incredible education system.

Kuechler continued presenting on "Overall confidence in Denton Government". Staff has begun discussions to address this low score and bring improvements.

Committee Chair Hudspeth asked about the rating score for the City's website and staff's feedback on the rating.

Kuechler responded that it was a little concerning but we have initiatives in place to address the issues related to this score. The website is a drastic upgrade from the prior outdated version, it is anticipated that improvements will be an ongoing process to accommodate citizen's feedback.

Committee Chair Hudspeth requested information on the types of devices used to access the website.

Robby Stengel responded that mobile and tablet trends are continuing to increase. In the past, access was 60% desktop and 40% mobile tablet. Within the past year this has changed to a 50/50 percentage. We are also working on improvements to the search function on our website to operate as closely to Google as possible.

Langley explained that the website upgrade was a very big task to determine with each department what content is appropriate, relevant, and helpful. A big obstacle staff faced was to lessen the number of documents stored on the website for internal uses. It might be helpful if we sent out a website-based survey to help find that balance. This website needs to work for everyone. Another unique challenge we face is that the City is not a singular focused business with one mission. We have a multitude of things we do that needs to be shared and that creates a big challenge.

Kuechler discussed 74% of the survey respondents voted in the last election. The survey also asked respondents why they didn't vote. 20% responded that they were not registered to vote, 25% said the voting location was inconvenient, and 55% was not aware of the election. Staff will use this information to promote the election process.

Kuechler continued to present the benchmark data, College Station, Bryan, Austin, Plano and Garland were used. She pointed out places where the City of Denton ranks higher than our comparable cities. The overall rating of the community is very high for quality of life.

Council Member Gregory asked if it was known where the survey respondents worked and how that information compared with what the Economic Development department office census statistics. Also, what level of pay do these jobs have?

Langley responded that this information would be provided.

Gregory asked what lessons the staff learned in terms of communication from this survey information.

Kuechler responded that staff has learned to be more proactive with communicating projects and spending more time sharing our accomplishments. Another reason this survey is performed is to review with our management teams to determine if current practices are working well or need to be changed.

**D. Receive a report, hold a discussion, and give staff direction regarding the citizen engagement, communication, and transparency initiatives.**

Kuechler presented information on programs we have completed, are working on, and are coming up in the future. We had 2 new programs this year. The first was the State of the City on March 30, 2017. We had approximately 150 people attended which is pretty good attendance for our first event. We plan to repeat this event next year and possibly have it earlier in the year to prevent conflicts using the video near an election.

Council Member Gregory recommended having the next state of the city in the fall. To also reconsider the Council booth because it did not get much activity. Add equipment such as a fire truck to the parking lot or raffle to win a ride in the DME bucket truck to help attract more people.

Committee Chair Hudspeth suggested changing the layout to address the echo issues, timing of the event to become more user friendly, and allow members to more freely attend.

Kuechler continued with discussion on the recently completed Citizen Academy that will receive a proclamation at the August 1<sup>st</sup> City Council meeting. The academy consisted of 12 residents who attended 5 sessions primarily on Saturdays. These sessions were interactive as they visited a lot of the departments and were able to have a hands on experience by handling some of the equipment. The residents were able to engage with high level staff in each of the departments as well. Our focus for the next session is to better market the academy and shorten the sessions.

Discussion continued on what areas appeared to be the academy's favorite areas.

Gregory moved the discussion to the annual Citizen Update report. He explained that the Citizen Update was content heavy and recommended summarizing the content and adding a website link at the bottom for those that want more information.

Kuechler agreed with this feedback and discussed future plans to send a bi-monthly newsletter mailed to all households in the city. Staff plans to begin this newsletter October 1, 2017. Staff is also exploring ideas to add a newsroom page to the website for those interested to learn what is happening in the city. This will create a central location to access all of this information.

Kuechler continued with discussion on an idea to host Open House events similar to the State of the City where different departments take turns hosting an event allowing citizens the opportunity to learn more about that area.

Kuechler discussed the new construction portal and map located on the main page of the website. She demonstrated the different functions of the map on the website and new information provided. This will add transparency to citizens to know what is happening in the City.

Kuechler continued discussing improvements made to the Informal Staff Reports. These have been posted to the website using Laser-fiche instead of putting documents directly on the website. This should be completed by Friday, August 4, 2017.

Kuechler asked the committee if they had any questions, concerns, or direction for staff to focus efforts on.

#### **E. Set future meeting dates and topics.**

The committee decided to meet near the end of September.

The committee asked staff to share the survey results, both the full and condensed report, with Council in the Friday staff report.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:47 p.m.

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GERARD HUDSPETH  
COMMITTEE CHAIR  
CITY OF DENTON, TEXAS

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SARAH LOLLAR  
RECORDING SECRETARY  
CITY OF DENTON, TEXAS